



OUT OF A YOUNG MAN'S LIFE

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OUT OF A YOUNG MAN'S LIFE.

POEMS

Wey
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BY
O. R. WASHBURN.

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MEADVILLE, PA.
McCOMB & CALVIN
1897

TO THE
FRIENDS OF MY SCHOOL DAYS
I DEDICATE
THIS BOOK.

Meadville, Pa., March, 1897.

I REMEMBER the gleams and glooms that dart
Across the school-boy's brain,
The song and the silence in the heart
That in part are prophecies, and in part
Are longings wild and vain.
And the voice of that fitful song
Sings on and is never still,
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

—*Longfellow.*

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OUT OF A YOUNG MAN'S LIFE.

A PRINCE.

WHO liveth the creed of an upright life,
Nor feareth the future's frown ;
Who stands for Truth when lies are rife
And faces the Evil down ;
Who never turns from the glowing star
Of Duty that gleams ahead,
Or loses the sound of trumpets afar
That ever God's host hath led :

He shall be King in his own domain,
Nor fear any foe or chance,
Though misfortune's blows may fall amain
Or pierce like a poisoned lance.
For he walks in step with the great, good God
Who loveth the Truth in men,

And the Fates obey at his glance or nod,
For his heart hath the strength of ten.

A light shines out from his fearless face
That gladdens this sad old world,
And his muscles are strong for the fiercest race,
Or to fight for God's flag unfurled.
Go! Take your place in the flower-strewn path
That the brave of the earth have trod,
And know the joy the true man hath
Who is Prince of the House of God.

THE DEAD FRIENDSHIP.

No earthly clod had covered his frail clay,
No funeral rite had o'er his form been said,
And yet I know, he went from me that day,
As sad-eyed Truth declared, "Thy friend is
dead."

I cannot think it gone from me forever—
That fire-wrapt heart that cheered my deepest
night.

No power can good from its existence sever.
Immortal glows each spark of Heaven's light.

Yet, in some hour in hopeful Future's keeping,
The spirit that I knew in years ago
May rise from out the grave where it lies sleeping,
To meet me in a resurrection dawn.

Some noble triumphs and some fair successes
That spirit gained before I lost it quite ;

And in the caves of Being's dark recesses,
Perhaps, it battles yet the powers of night.

And so I will not say with bitter sorrow,

“My friend is dead, he never will return ; ”

But, “Here we two friends parted till some
morrow

Shall teach the lessons weakness could not
learn.”

OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

WE strive and cry in bitter pain,
 With useless hands we beat the air.
We cry, no voice replies again,
 We pray and find but dark despair.
We raise to Heaven our longing eyes
 And feel the thoughts we cannot speak.
Our hearts are full of smothered cries
 The Wrong is strong, the Right is weak.

Nor yet alone the evil powers
 Turn dark as Hell the ways of life,
And wrench away our peaceful hours
 Or ruin trust by hate and strife ;
But Love itself, in purest form
 That brings the best the fates bestow,
Has in its train the fiery storm
 That makes the torment devils know.

O God, if such there be that guides
 Through mazy ways the steps of all,

I pray Thee give, if naught besides,
One love that shall not fail nor fall.
For then, although I know not Thee,
Still while I draw uncertain breath,
I'll know my true friends number three,
Myself, my loved one, and the angel—Death.

FROM THE HEIGHTS.

Who has stood beside the rail
On his only ship ;
Seen the loosing of each sail,
Seen the rigging dip,
While away within the night
Far as eye can reach,
One faint star shines still in sight
O'er the harbor beach.

Who has stood above his men
On some lofty height,
Seen them slow come back again
Beaten from the fight,
While afar adown the plain
Gleam the banners gay—
His last reserve, a gallant train,
Can they save the day?

Who, while loss and bitter pain
Turn his heart to dust,

Scorns to let his lips complain,
 Waits — but dares not trust,
Fair to him the harbor bright,
 Glad the victory won
When love's day dispels the night,
 And the strife is done.

THANKSGIVING.

PRAISE the Lord !

For the good the season brings,
For the song the future sings,
For white Peace that spreads its wings
And o'er-broods the growing state,
Stilling envy, strife, and hate ;
For the dainties on our board ;
Hearts and voices praise the Lord !

Thank the Lord !

For the ill that passed us by,
For the love too strong to die,
For the faith in God on high,
Lifting up the weary heart,
Comforting, though tear drops start ;
Join we all in sweet accord,
Hearts and voices praise the Lord !

Raise the hymn !

For the fleeing shades of night,

For the coming gleam of light,
For the gift of clearer sight,
Sight that makes the footsteps sure
In the walk of paths more pure
Than the thorny hedge of creed
Gave our fathers greater need ;
For the growing light and Word,
Hearts and voices praise the Lord !

Shout your joy !
All the past that was not true,
All that hindered me and you,
All that crushed the saintly few,
Who from God brought messages,
Disappear, return to dust ;
Weary doubt gives way to trust.
From the wealth your hearts afford,
Raise your voices, praise the Lord !

Give Him thanks !
For the homes by love made sweet,
For the friends we hourly greet,
For the Christ in store or street,

That in each pure thought of man
Visits now the earth again.
And while hearts and love endure
Give God witness ; strong and sure.
Each with each in sweet accord
Raise a voice to praise the Lord !

THE SEAS ARE HIS.

No matter how the storms may beat,
Or how chill fogs roll nigh,
The broken wrecks float to His feet
In harbors bye and bye.
No power can drive us from God's might
However dark it be,
And though our barques pass out of sight,
'Tis to another sea.

PRAYER.

WRONG and sorrow, sin and curses,
See them come!
Hate and kindness, judgments, mercies,
Are we dumb?
Let the spirit from the darkness
Send its cry,
If God hears and ruleth all things,
He'll reply.

When upon the bed of weakness,
Low we lie,
Can we always wait with meekness
Till we die?
Man in suffering, toil and sorrow
Still must pray;
Pray and hope a brighter morrow
Than to-day.

For as from the suffering, dying,
Comes the moan,

So the hearts of mortals crying,
Pray alone.
While the good and evil blended,
Of our life,
Make us wish the journey ended,
And the strife;

Make us glad to face the fighting
Of all wrong,
And with love our pathway lighting
All along,
Tread the path where Jesus mounted
Long ago,
Till, when all the years are counted,
We shall know.

M. J. S.

As through the thickest battle onward leads
The fighting host some great and valiant soul,
Nor recks of loss or gain, but forward fares,—
So leads us in the van of human thought
This strong-armed Hector o'er the moving field.
Nor pause nor fear he knows, but ever on,
And wields his sword and casts the gleaming lance,
While smaller men grow mighty at his back,
And high above the conflict sounds his voice
That onward calls the host to Truth and Góð.

OLD WINE.

POUR me a cup of ripe old wine

Drawn from the vintage of friendship old ;
It will fill my heart with a passion fine
And warm my soul midst the vapors cold.

Turn it free but spill no drop ;

It was pressed from the fruit when life was
young.

Pray it may last till our seasons stop,

And the last, best verse of our song is sung.

Thanks! I drink to life's best thought,

The memory sweet of summers fled,
And till stars are set and love is naught

May the wine hold out though the vine be dead.

MY BIBLE.

I HAVE a Bible, scattered far
Through all the ways of boundless space,
A glowing page on every star,
And lines of truth in every place.

My eyes see words of hope and cheer
Across the miles of deep abyss,
And find in every whirling sphere
The story of the Genesis.

In every form of busy life,
That from the earth its being draws,
I trace, through all the change and strife,
In living words, the Book of Laws.

In lines of blood on dead Past's tomb,
I read the Prophets' warning cry,
And know from out the mist and gloom
A fairer day shall greet the eye.

In Right, by Wrong in power oppressed,
In faithful love most sorely tried,
I read, in virtue thus distressed,
The story of the Crucified.

Whene'er I see the sunlight fall
From glowing hearts on dogma's mists,
I read in letters plain to all
The works of the Evangelists.

And when I see the loving look
Of that pure soul I hold most dear,
In blessed lines I read the Book
Of Revelation plain and clear.

AFTER THE PLAY.

FROM yawning depths, to sense unknown,
The ghost of Hamlet came to tell
The tale that shook the Danish throne,
Until, mid blood and groans, it fell.

The vengeance that the dead king sought
Was granted. Breaking death's restraint,
Far greater ill than Claudius wrought,
He worked by his unblest complaint.

For if from gates of Heaven or Hell
In truth no phantom had returned,
Through peaceful years unthreatened, well
The fires on Denmark's hearths had burned.

No evil scripture writ in red,
Had cursed the peasant's thoughtless sight,
A people's passions had not fed
On news of murder, lust, and spite.

And in the halls where he did move,
A king beside his weaker wife,
What years of joy and faithful love,
He blasted by his touch with life.

Ophelia, fair mid flowers, had moved,
With but the happy maiden's sigh,
Her songs, her sleepy children soothed,
Nor ended in a drowning cry.

Laertes, strong of will and soul,
Who knows how bright his life had shone?
Young Hamlet, heart and spirit whole,
Would yet have ruled from Denmark's throne.

Not so the witless ghost allowed,
But brought from Hell its pain and tears,
And trailed from off his rotting shroud,
The grave mold o'er the flowers of years.

Better for him and all he loved,
The guilty king and fickle wife,
Some few brief years in peace had moved
Unpunished in their baser life.

For wrong once done no sword repairs ;
The wounds of ill no blows can heal,
And Love, who guides up joy's bright stairs,
Points not the way with tempered steel.

The justice that we blindly ask
For wrong, that now no toil can right,
Is foul revenge, howe'er we mask
Our sinful thought from human sight.

And when, O Lord, with hearts that burn,
Men question where old blames most lie,
Let not the shadowy ghosts return,
To make the stern reply.

FAIR WEATHER FRIENDSHIP.

LEAVE not the door of friendship wide,
When bitter winds are blowing ;
Close up the house, remember well
The days when flowers were growing.
And so with hearth well kept and warm,
Await the gentler weather,
When free from frost and chilling gusts,
Your friend and you together
May spend an hour in thought of things,
You hold as one forever.

THE CREEDAL LIFEBOAT.

I KNOW a lighthouse on a rock,
Where beats the surf upon the shore
Until it trembles with the shock
Of waves that tramp the hard sea-floor.

And from within, one dark, wild night,
I heard the sound of solemn song
Peal grandly through the windows light
And echo far the shore along.

And as I stood I heard them float
In solemn measure words like these :
“ Our lifeboat is the safest boat
That ever braved the seas.”

The lamps within the upper tower
Gleamed dimly, smoking 'gainst the pane ;
Afar I saw the storm rack lower,
And felt the dash of winter rain.

Yet still the voices strong and brave,
 With reverent measure beat the strain,
As highest praise those watchers gave
 To that strong craft that braved the main.

Up in the tower the lamps flared out ;
 Far out at sea a rocket hissed ;
 And o'er the reef the white squall kissed
The waves that gave an answering shout.

No heed the solemn watchers paid,
 But gathered round the lifeboat fair—
The strongest sailor's skill had made—
 And praised it with a reverent air.

The storm sheen lifted ; far away,
 I saw a fleet of fisher boats
With captains powerless, save to pray,
 And drowning men on spars and floats.

I shouted — but the watchers sang ;
 I beat the door ; but still the more
They, heeding not the cries that rang,
 Told all the lifeboat's virtues o'er.

And with the currents all afloat
With perished men, their words were these :
“ Our life-boat is the staunchest boat
That ever braved the seas.”

IMMORTAL.

TURN, Time, thy hour-glass, smile thy solemn
smile,

The pyramids, the sphinx, the world is thine ;
But spirit laughs in thy gray face the while,
And whispers hope to human hearts like mine.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

NURSED midst the perils of the wilderness,
Where forests grim their tangled crests did rear;
Well taught by penury's stern kindness
His brother's toilful efforts to revere ;

Strong with the strength that honest labor brings,
And blithe in spirit as the mountain bird ;
He came to us as one of Nature's kings,
And taught to earth the word his spirit heard.

Toiling in patience by his humble home ;
Bending at night time o'er the treasured page,
He laid the basis of a loftier dome
Than e'en his wildest hope could dare presage.

Not in the halls where wit and culture meet,
He sought the laurels for the scholar's brow ;
But friendly Nature gave him welcome sweet
And taught him grandeur's lessons by the plow.

Till, touched by cries of anguish from the slave,
Whose chains lay heavy on his noble heart,
He dared the millioned Pharaoh's wrath to brave,
And raise a cry for freedom in their mart.

And out from old New England rose the cry
That echoed back where wild Columbia ran,
"The cause of God! The cause shall never die!
Up! Arm for freedom! God has sent the man!"

No brush can paint nor eloquence describe
The long and dreary night our country knew,
As o'er the peaceful heavens swift did ride
The war clouds dark that hid all else from view.

Yet somehow through the groans of brothers slain,
And midst the moans of widows bow'd with grief,
He brought our bright-eyed Freedom back again,
And with her, Peace, and Plenty with her sheaf.

And while we raised in joyous shout the cry
Of gladness for God's vict'ry dearly won,
Lo! at our feet in death we saw him lie,
And Liberty did mourn her noble son.

Green be his memory ! We bow today,
And o'er his ashes heap the wreaths again,
And as we bow send up a prayer, and say
“ Here sleeps a mortal who has lived a man.”

THE LIFE WITHIN.

FROM all of human littleness, from all the petty
 strifes of men,
The human soul sometimes will turn to seek the
 Infinite again.
'Tis hid from man whence life's strong wine first
 into earthly dust did flow,
Yet still we see the wondrous plan and trust the
 good we cannot know.
From out-worn creeds, from threadbare lies, the
 noble spirit turns away;
True manhood feels that it but needs unto a
 better self to pray.
Our higher selves! Ah! could we see the glory
 that abides in each!
That in ourselves the Spirit dwells more holy
 than a creed can teach,
We'd turn no more our forms to say, but leave
 behind each savage trait,
And bring at once to poor mankind the perfect
 good, the perfect state.

THE EXODUS.

ALL through the past, in every clime and state,
The two or three have proved the moving
power

To right the wrong, call in the knocking hour,
And break the bands of Custom, Creed and Hate.
To-day, the prophets' calls take deeper meaning,
The earnest spirit struggles to be free,
God's people out from Egypt still are streaming,
Comes Luther from his cell and Christ from
Galilee.

THE EXCUSE OF THE FOOLISH VIRGINS.

AH, blame us not ! Nor shut the door in scorn ;
Our lamps are out. The oil, we did not bring.
With faith in human kindness inborn,
We ran, and halted not, with you to sing.

Surely we trusted in your human hearts,
Your love and goodness unto those who lack ;
Now as our tears fast fall and joy departs,
Unclose the door and give our gladness back.

We did but strive the bridegroom's way along
To cheer with mirth and lighten with our praise.
Had we kept back, nor brought our lamp or song
We now should sit beneath the feast-lamp's
blaze.

Surely the effort well is worth a place
In some dim corner of the darkest room ;
Some smile of welcome, not unmixed disgrace,
Should greet our hearts to drive away the
gloom.

We strove to act so that the bride might smile,
That him she loves would give us honor due,
And should the effort meet with scorn the while
Because neglect made vain the purpose true?

In heaven, we know, beyond the still, cold stars
No scorn shall greet us all our joy to kill,
But God's strong justice shall undo the bars
And light the lamps you would not aid to fill.

BED-TIME.

BED-TIME : We lay us down to rest in peace,
To slumber through the happy hours, nor
dream,
As slowly all our cares and strivings cease,
Of what shall come when morrow's sun shall
beam.

Bed-time : Kind Nature draws the curtains too,
And soothes us sweetly to our certain rest,
Nor tells if we the ages slumber through,
Or wake at once to be the future's guest.

Yet, Nature, let thy gentle forces fall,
Bind up our wounds and give us blessed rest ;
We question not God's loving care for all,
And He in love shall give us what is best.

NO CRAPE UPON THE DOOR.

No crape upon the door, my friends,
 No crape upon the door;
For when with flying feet I go
 To meet the friends of other years,
And some good hours of converse know
 Before the last gray guest appears,
Belated, cold before the glow
 That friendship kindles there,
'Twere sad to chill our social talk
 With thought of those upon my walk,
Who pause my half-swung gate before,
 Of that black cloth become aware,
And laugh or jest no more.

No crape for me. The whirling years
 That bring their round of toil and change,
That mock the hopes of weaker men
 With seeming loss and death, may range
Unheeded by the souls that dare.
 And when at times grief's night shuts down,

'Tis but dim eyes that fail to see,
 'Tis but our doubts that cloud the way,
Nor lost the orbs of perfect day,
 Or radiant love still shining free,
Or friendship's stars, though spite of fears
 Our little world of sense turns round.

No crape upon the door, good friends,
 To still the pulse of joy.
Nor yet in hall or silent room
 Should cross or crown within the gloom
In woven blossoms mark the place
 Of that worn coat I use no more ;
Nor question sad of silent space,
 Or vainly listen at death's door,
To hear a voice come back from me.
 But let your steady voices blend
In quiet strength nor doubt that I
 With buoyant spirit still defy
The touch that earthly forms destroy
 And of old weakness makes an end.

TIME'S MERCHANDISE.

TIME, like a merchant selling wares
With boats at each man's landing stairs,
Unloads his bales of good and ill
And lets us choose whate'er we will.
Ah, blame him not, nor murmur make.
Not what he brings but what we take
Endows the heart with joy or tears.

CHAINED TO THE POST.

CHAINED to the post, the iron cup
Swings all day long in the dust and heat ;
Marred and dented by careless hands
Mid the rush and din of the busy street.

Chained to the post, with dent and mar,
The form and life of a child of God ;
Tossed by the hands it best had served,
Not granted the peace of the meanest clod.

Yet the iron cup and the priceless soul,
However battered and worn and bound,
Are serving a purpose a king might crave —
If the waters of life within be found.

REVELATION.

THROUGH ages flitting come the Truths of God,
Like doves low sailing o'er the heads of men,
And still we mortals turn the cold, hard clod
With downward look to find His Word again.

Only some prophet with a heart of fire,
A mighty seer among the millions blind,
Looks up, o'er mastered by Divine desire,
Some mystic light from Heaven's lamps to find.

And straight to him fly messengers of flame
With revelations from the Soul above,
And he, upreaching, speaks his teacher's name,
Then writes a sentence in the Book of Love.

THE VILLAGE OF THE DEAD.

I WANDERED up across the sheepfields bare,
Across the orchard by the cattle shed,
Then feeling weary in the heated air,
I rested in the village of the dead.

A quiet gathering in the silence deep,
Where tangled vines and grasses hide the sand,
Some humble farmers laid away in sleep
Between the walls where waving chestnuts stand.

Their story, carved in all the landscape round,
Can well be read by dreamers such as I ;
Here in these fields their battle place they found,
Grim breastworks were the low walls standing
nigh.

Oft as the sun sent courier beams ahead
To tell that day was coming, warm with haste,
These champions left the hard, unyielding bed,
Once more the farmwork's bitter wine to taste.

Oft when the locust gave his rasping song,
Through the dry noon-time's glow of dust and
heat,
In skirmish line they still marched bravely on
To give the hostile weeds a sure defeat.

Nor was their labor but for simple wants ;
They hunted Error in her darkest den,
They read of Homer and the satyr's haunts,
And in the rustic meetings spake as men.

Think not the knotted hands laid here to rest
But piled the stones in Nature's stubborn field ;
They shaped the lives of those who lead the best,
The thoughts they sowed a golden harvest yield.

Here let them rest, their weary fight was won ;
They held their walls against the march of
Want
Then laid they down in peace, their striving done,
Nor asked the world their deeds abroad to
flaunt.

So let us leave them, soldiers of the soil,
Who won in bloodless battles spoil for kings ;
They did their duty, facing life's stern toil,
And brought the world a step toward better
things.

A DAY IN DECEMBER.

GRAY sky and chilling cloud,
Leaf and flower crushed in clay,
Nature in her cold, damp shroud,
And the world is drear to-day.

Chill thoughts within the heart,
Life's best flowers passed away,
Sorrow waits as hopes depart,
And the soul is drear to-day.

ROYALTY.

Who walks upright the paths of life,
Who fears not want or death,
His soul shall conquer in the strife,
Though wrong may still his breath.

The priest may curse and lay the ban,
His friends may fall away,
But the fearless soul of a manly man
No tribute to them can pay.

Love, fame, and fortune all may fade,
The body may turn to dust,
But the spirit in armor of truth arrayed
Can ever its future trust.

Then turn from the life of the low and small
To the life of the fearless few,
Though it lead from a throne in a palace hall,
To a bench 'midst the galley's crew.

For the spirit of man is a regal thing,
And should bow to no earthly might ;
And the lowliest soul may reign a king
When it conquers the powers of night.

THE PASSING OF THE YEAR.

As comes a herald from some eastern king
With riches laden, all his hands can hold,
So doth September all her harvest bring
Of nut and fruit and grain more fair than gold.

So when the chilling frosts of age shall come
And withered lie our days like fallen leaves,
May we in triumph bring our treasures home
To bind as gleanings with the Master's sheaves.

October finds a matron clothed with gold,
Dame Nature in her Autumn robe arrayed,
She leads her gently to the grave so cold,
Then leaves her with a wreath of snow o'erlaid.

November, mourning at Dame Nature's death,
Hangs all the sky with crape of sable cloud,
Then o'er the dreary fields sends sighing breath,
And through the cheerless evenings moaneth
loud.

Stir up again the Christmas fires,
Forget all grief, no more be sad,
No soul that struggles and aspires
Can pause to-day and not be glad.

The children shout, the feast is spread,
The hardest heart forgets its scorn,
And in the brain the doubt is dead,
And in the heart the Christ is born.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

A GREETING TO ABSENT FRIENDS.

To-NIGHT I sit before the fire
And in the coals my castles build,
 No more of high and spacious dome,
 As in the days long past and dead ;
 My wildest dreams but rears a home.
 But now old memories crowd instead
Through all my thoughts, and comes desire
To send the greeting long withheld.

The stranger warmed at glowing hearth,
 Where met for jest a jovial crew,
Reluctant turns to roam the earth
 And sighs to miss the joys he knew.
The sailor, stopping at some isle
 Where palm and fern grow ever green,
Remembers it when many a mile
 Of surging waters roll between.

So I, a traveler, having known
The pleasant hours of winter nights
When quick my friends a charm have thrown
Around some dear ones' bright home lights,
Send back a thought across the miles
That bar me from the scenes I knew ;
Recalling all the songs and smiles
That blessed the moments as they flew.

There many an eve was grief dethroned
And talent yoked with giddy mirth ;
The weary rule of care disowned,
And well we learned to know the worth
Of joyous foot-falls on the floor,
The tones where love and pleasure blend ;
The welcome in the wide-flung door
That opens to the waiting friend.

But now for me the door is fast.
As at the end the storm without
Beats with a keen and biting blast
Upon the traveler wandering forth,
So chills life's air, and I, perforce,

Draw memories' cloak about my soul
Against the frost of circumstance.

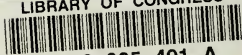
Vain care ! For me the cheerful fires
That burned within that circle fair
Are dim and fading ; my desires
Are as dead footsteps on the stair
When midnight comes, and I go out
To meet the storms upon my face,
The star's cold light, and hear a shout
Come back from those who leave the place
Where late we sang our parting song.

But let the heart still bear within
Some ringing music sung with joy,
Some notes of mirth as we begin,
Once more with faith, life's stern employ.

Take then this greeting, friends of mine,
This New Year's wish, that strong and clear
The radiant lights may burn and shine
Upon your hearths for many a year.
And pure and bright, out reaching all,
Some rays from memory's lamp may glow,

Some shaft from friendship's taper fall
Upon my path, where e're I go,
Till one home light gives welcome call
Above the unlatched door of Death.

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